



Kabul airport attack kills 60 Afghans, 12 U.S. troops

By SAYED ZIARMAL HASHEMI, RAHIM FAIEZ, LOLITA C. BALDOR and JOSEPH KRAUSS

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) —

Two suicide bombers and gunmen attacked crowds of Afghans flocking to Kabul's airport Thursday, transforming a scene of desperation into one of horror in the waning days of an airlift for those fleeing the Taliban takeover. The attacks killed at least 60 Afghans and 12 U.S. troops, Afghan and U.S. officials said.

The U.S. general overseeing the evacuation vowed the United States would "go after" the perpetrators of the bombings, and warned that more such attacks are expected.

"We are working very hard right now to determine

attribution, to determine who is associated with this cowardly attack. And we're prepared to take action against them," Gen. Frank McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command, told Pentagon reporters in a briefing. "Twenty-four-seven. We are looking for them." Shortly after McKenzie spoke, the Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the killings on its Amaq news channel. McKenzie said the attacks would not stop the United States from evacuating Americans and others, and flights out were continuing. He said there was a large amount of security at the airport, and alternate routes were being used to get evacuees in.

Continued on next page



Smoke rises from a deadly explosion outside the airport in Kabul, Afghanistan, Thursday, Aug. 26, 2021.

Associated Press

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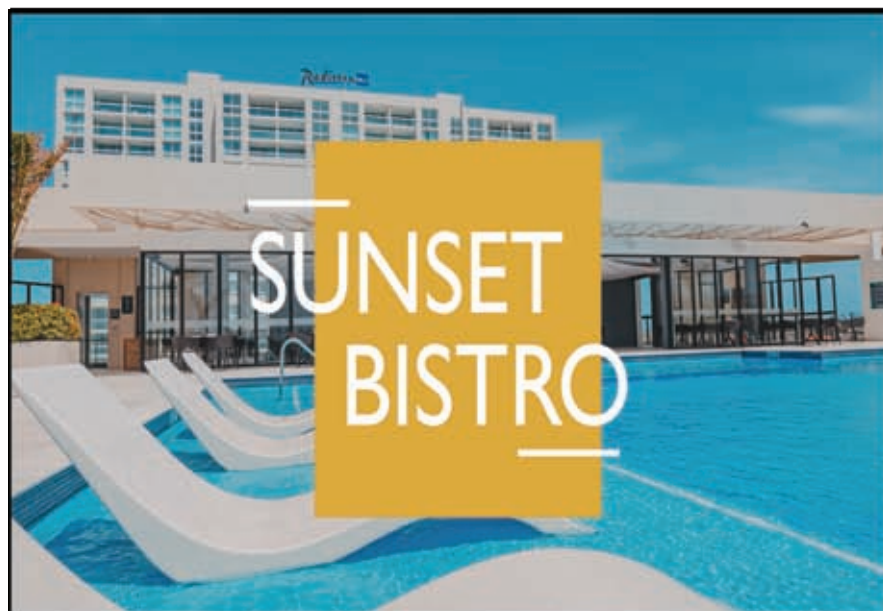


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Explosion outside Kabul airport



Sources: Planet Labs Inc., Wikimapia, Associated Press reports

AP

Satellite image shows Kabul International Airport and the location of an explosion near the Abbey Gate.

Associated Press

Continued from Front

U.S. officials said 11 Marines and one Navy medic were among those who died. McKenzie said another 15 service members were wounded. Officials warned the toll could grow. More than 140 Afghans were wounded, an Afghan official said. One of the bombers struck people standing knee-deep in a wastewater canal under the sweltering sun, throwing bodies into the fetid water. Those who moments earlier had hoped to get on flights out could be seen carrying the wounded to ambulances in a daze, their own clothes darkened with blood. The IS affiliate in Afghanistan is far more radical than the Taliban, who recently took control of the country in a lightning blitz and condemned the attack. Western officials had warned of a major attack, urging people to leave the

airport, but that advice went largely unheeded by Afghans desperate to escape the country in the last few days of an American-led evacuation before the U.S. officially ends its 20-year presence on Aug. 31. Emergency, an Italian charity that operates hospitals in Afghanistan, said it had received at least 60 patients wounded in the airport attack, in addition to 10 who were dead when they arrived. "Surgeons will be working into the night," said Marco Puntin, the charity's manager in Afghanistan. The wounded overflowed the triage zone into the physiotherapy area and more beds were being added, he said. The Afghan official who confirmed the overall Afghan toll spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief media. Pentagon spokesman John

Kirby said one explosion was near an airport entrance and another was a short distance away by a hotel. McKenzie said clearly some failure at the airport allowed a suicide bomber to get so close to the gate. He said the Taliban has been screening people outside the gates, though there was no indication that the Taliban deliberately allowed Thursday's attacks to happen. He said the U.S. has asked Taliban commanders to tighten security around the airport's perimeter. Adam Khan was waiting nearby when he saw the first explosion outside what's known as the Abbey gate. He said several people appeared to have been killed or wounded, including some who were maimed. The second blast was at or near Baron Hotel, where many people, including Afghans, Britons and Ameri-

cans, were told to gather in recent days before heading to the airport for evacuation. Additional explosions could be heard later, but Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said some blasts were carried out by U.S. forces to destroy their equipment. A former Royal Marine who runs an animal shelter in Afghanistan says he and his staff were caught up in the aftermath of the blast near the airport. "All of a sudden we heard gunshots and our vehicle was targeted, had our driver not turned around he would have been shot in the head by a man with an AK-47," Paul "Pen" Farthing told Britain's Press Association news agency. Farthing is trying to get staff of his Nowzad charity out of Afghanistan, along with the group's rescued animals. He is among thousands trying to flee. Over the last week, the airport has been the scene of some of the most searing images of the chaotic end of America's longest war and the Taliban's takeover, as flight after flight took off carrying those who fear a return to the militants' brutal rule. When the Taliban were last in power, they confined women largely to their home and widely imposed draconian restrictions. Already, some countries have ended their evacuations and begun to withdraw their soldiers and diplomats, signaling the beginning of the end of one of history's largest airlifts. The Taliban have insisted foreign troops must be out by America's self-imposed deadline of Aug. 31 — and the evacuations must end

then, too. In Washington, U.S. President Joe Biden spent much of the morning in the secure White House Situation Room where he was briefed on the explosions and conferred with his national security team and commanders on the ground in Kabul. Overnight, warnings emerged from Western capitals about a threat from IS, which has seen its ranks boosted by the Taliban's freeing of prisoners during its advance through Afghanistan. Shortly before the attack, the acting U.S. ambassador to Kabul, Ross Wilson, said the security threat at the Kabul airport overnight was "clearly regarded as credible, as imminent, as compelling." But in an interview with ABC News, he would not give details. Late Wednesday, the U.S. Embassy warned citizens at three airport gates to leave immediately due to an unspecified security threat. Australia, Britain and New Zealand also advised their citizens Thursday not to go to the airport. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid denied that any attack was imminent at the airport, where the group's fighters have deployed and occasionally used heavy-handed tactics to control the crowds. After the attack, he appeared to shirk blame, noting the airport is controlled by U.S. troops. Before the blast, the Taliban sprayed a water cannon at those gathered at one airport gate to try to drive the crowd away, as someone launched tear gas canisters elsewhere. □

Capitol Police officers sue Trump, allies over insurrection

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. Capitol Police officers who were attacked and beaten during the Capitol riot filed a lawsuit Thursday against former President Donald Trump, his allies and members of far-right extremist groups, accusing them of intentionally sending a violent mob on Jan. 6 to disrupt the congressional certification of the election. The suit in federal court in Washington alleges Trump "worked with white supremacists, violent extremist groups, and campaign supporters to violate the Ku Klux Klan Act, and commit acts of domestic terrorism in an unlawful effort to stay in power."

The suit was filed on behalf of the seven officers by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. It names the former president, the Trump campaign, Trump ally Roger Stone and members of the extremist groups the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers who were present at the Capitol and in Washington on Jan. 6. Two other similar cases have been filed in recent



In this Jan. 6, 2021, file photo President Donald Trump speaks during a rally protesting the electoral college certification of Joe Biden as President in Washington.

Associated Press

months by Democratic members of Congress. The suits allege the actions of Trump and his allies led to the violence siege of the Capitol that injured dozens of police officers, halted the certification of Democrat Joe Biden's electoral victory and sent lawmakers running for their lives as

rioters stormed into the seat of American democracy wielding bats, poles and other weapons. A House committee has started in earnest to investigate what happened that day, sending out requests Wednesday for documents from intelligence, law enforcement and other gov-

ernment agencies. Their largest request so far was made to the National Archive for information on Trump and his former team. Trump accused the committee of violating "long-standing legal principles of privilege" but his team had no immediate comment on Thursday's lawsuit.

"Executive privilege will be defended, not just on behalf of my Administration and the Patriots who worked beside me, but on behalf of the Office of the President of the United States and the future of our Nation," Trump said.

The suit names as defendants several people who have been charged with federal crimes related to the riot. They are alleged to have "conspired to use force, intimidation, and threats to prevent Joe Biden and Kamala Harris from taking office, to prevent Congress from counting the electoral votes, and to prevent the Capitol Police from carrying out their lawful duties."

The filing provides vivid accounts of the injuries the officers sustained while trying to fend off the mob as rioters pushed past lines of overwhelmed law enforcers and barged into the Capitol. One officer, Jason DeRoche, was hit with batteries and sprayed with mace and bear spray until his eyes were swollen shut. □

Hochul announces Benjamin as pick for lieutenant governor

NEW YORK (AP) — New York Gov. Kathy Hochul introduced state Sen. Brian Benjamin as her choice for lieutenant governor Thursday in the senator's Harlem district, where the two promised to work together to address the ongoing pandemic and get COVID-19 relief into New Yorkers' pockets. Hochul, the former lieutenant governor, took office Tuesday after the resignation of Andrew Cuomo amid a sexual harassment scandal. Hochul, who plans to run in the Democratic gubernatorial primary in June, and Benjamin spoke Thursday alongside longtime Cuomo allies who ultimately called on him to resign: Rev. Al Sharpton and NAACP New York State Conference President Hazel Dukes. Benjamin will be sworn-in "right after Labor Day," Hochul said.

The governor said New York will hold a special election in November to fill Benjamin's state Senate seat in Harlem. Democrats are expected to keep their supermajority in the state Senate. "I want to thank the entire village of Harlem who helped create this young man who's going to help us lead the state into better days and prosperity," Hochul told a cheering crowd of supporters. Benjamin, 44, was born in Harlem Hospital and grew up in Harlem as the son of Caribbean immigrants. He earned his master's of business administration from Harvard Business School. As a state lawmaker, he has focused on criminal justice reform, recently helping push through a law to criminalize the use of police chokeholds that result in injury or death. "So many kids walking down 125th Street right now need

to know this world is here for them," he said, adding: "Our community needs the government to work." Hochul and Benjamin didn't name Cuomo directly, but both vowed to help usher in a new collaborative approach between state and local government in New York. Benjamin called her a "person of integrity," and added: "You could tell a lot about somebody before they have that ultimate power." While the role of lieutenant governor in New York is largely ceremonial, Hochul was the second person with the job in 13 years to become governor following a resignation. Hochul stressed that Benjamin will serve as her "partner" and that they'll "work side-by-side in the trenches." Benjamin vowed to raise support for the new admin-



State Sen. Brian Benjamin embraces Gov. Kathy Hochul during an event in the Harlem neighborhood of New York, Thursday, Aug. 26, 2021, in New York.

Associated Press

istration's policies statewide and focus on issues from homelessness to gun violence. Benjamin's New York City roots could help drive support for Hochul. The city makes up more than a third of the state's 13.4 million registered voters. And Benjamin's legislative re-

cord could help her make inroads with the party's progressive wing, which could be crucial in a primary. Benjamin unsuccessfully ran for New York City comptroller this year. He serves as senior assistant majority leader in the Senate and chair of the budget and revenue committee. □

Virus surge breaks hospital records amid rising toll on kids

By **SUDHIN THANAWALA**
and **JAY REEVES**
Associated Press

Kentucky and Texas joined a growing list of states that are seeing record numbers of hospitalized COVID-19 patients in a surge that is overwhelming doctors and nurses and afflicting more children.

Intensive care units around the nation are packed with patients extremely ill with the coronavirus — even in places where hospitalizations have not yet reached earlier peaks.

The ICU units at Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital in Georgia typically have room for 38 patients, and doctors and nurses may have only two or three people who are very sick, said Dr. Jyotir Mehta, medical director of the ICU. On Wednesday, the ICU had 50 COVID-19 patients alone, roughly half of them relying on ventilators to breathe.

"I don't think we have experienced this much critical illness in folks, so many people sick at the same time," Mehta said.

He said talking to family members is difficult. "They are grasping for every hope and you're trying to tell them, 'Look, it's bad,'" he said. "You have to tell them that your loved one is not going to make it."

In New Mexico, top health officials warned Wednesday that the state is about a week away from ration-



A Dallas County Health and Human Services nurse completes paperwork after administering a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at a county run vaccination site in Dallas, Thursday, Aug. 26, 2021.

Associated Press

ing health care. The number of coronavirus patients needing care at hospitals jumped more than 20% in a day.

"We're going to have to choose who gets care and who doesn't get care," state Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. David Scrase warned. "And we don't want to get to that point."

In Idaho, state leaders called on residents to volunteer to help keep medical facilities operating.

Texas and Kentucky on Wednesday reported more COVID-19 patients in their hospitals than at any other time since the pandemic began, 14,255 and 2,074, respectively. The Texas re-

cord is based on U.S. Department of Health and Human Services data.

At least six other states — Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Hawaii, Mississippi and Oregon — have already broken their hospitalization records.

In Texas, nearly 47% of the population is fully vaccinated — below the national average of almost 52% — and Republican Gov. Greg Abbott has banned mask and vaccine mandates. Many counties and school districts have defied his mask ban.

In Kentucky, just under 48% of the population is fully vaccinated, and public health officials have blamed the lag in part for

the state's surge. Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear's COVID-19 restrictions expired in June, and the GOP-controlled legislature has blocked him from issuing new mask requirements or capacity limits.

Nationwide, COVID-19 deaths are running at more than 1,100 a day, the highest level since mid-March, and new cases per day are averaging over 152,000, turning the clock back to the end of January. As of early this week, the number of people in the hospital with the coronavirus was around 85,000, a level not seen since early February.

The surge is largely fueled by the highly contagious delta variant among peo-

ple who are unvaccinated. In areas where vaccination rates are particularly low, doctors have pleaded with their communities to get inoculated to spare overburdened hospitals.

They have also sounded the alarm about the growing toll of the variant on children and young adults. Children now make up 36% of Tennessee's reported COVID-19 cases, marking yet another sobering milestone in the state's battle against the virus, Health Commissioner Lisa Piercey said Wednesday. She said the state had 14,000 pediatric cases in the last seven days — a 57% increase over the previous week.

In South Carolina, students will again be required to wear masks on school buses starting Monday as COVID-19 cases among children and students rise rapidly.

Nearly 30% of new cases in South Carolina in the past two weeks have been in people 20 and under. During the same time in 2020, about 17% of cases were in children and teens, according to state officials.

Anderson Lopez Castillo, a nurse who cares for seriously ill COVID-19 patients at UAB Hospital in Birmingham, Alabama, said treating people as young as 16 in critical care has become an additional strain on top of a nearly yearlong ordeal that left him questioning his choice of a profession. □



This Sept. 26, 2016, file photo, shows the Millennium Tower in San Francisco.

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A \$100 million fix to stop a San Francisco luxury high-

rise from sinking and tilting even more is on hold while engineers try to learn why

New sinking in tilting San Francisco high-rise halts repair

the building has sunk another inch (2.5 centimeters) during the repair.

Doug Elmetts, spokesman for the Millennium Tower, said in a statement that pile installation to beef up the building's foundation is on hold for two to four weeks as they try to understand why the "increased settlement rate and available means of mitigating this." Elmetts said the building is safe, the San Francisco Chronicle reported

Thursday. The 58-story tower opened to fanfare in 2009 and all 419 apartments quickly sold out. High-profile residents have included former San Francisco 49er Joe Montana, late venture capitalist Tom Perkins and Giants outfielder Hunter Pence. But by 2016, the building had sunk 16 inches (40 centimeters) into the soft soil and landfill of San Francisco's dense financial district. It was also lean-

ing, creating a 2-inch (5-cm) tilt at the base and a 6-inch (15-cm) lean at the top. Residents sued the developer and designers. A confidential settlement reached last year with homeowners included \$100 million to install 52 concrete, 140,000-pound (63,500-kilogram) piles to anchor the building to bedrock 250 feet (76 meters) below ground. Piles provide foundation support. □

Tigray forces in Ethiopia support 'negotiated end' to war

By CARA ANNA
Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) —

The leader of Tigray forces in Ethiopia has expressed the commitment to a "negotiated end" to the nine-month war that has killed thousands and left nearly half a million people facing famine, while the United Nations secretary-general on Thursday warned "there is no military solution."

In a letter to U.N. chief Antonio Guterres, seen by The Associated Press ahead of Thursday's U.N. Security Council meeting on the crisis, Debretsion Gebremichael said the Tigray side requires an impartial mediator, among other conditions.

But he warned that the African Union, whose headquarters are in Ethiopia, "cannot provide any solution to the war" that the continental body "endorsed" early in the fighting. That complicates the AU initiative announced Thursday to appoint former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo as its special representative to the Horn of Africa.

The prospect for talks between Ethiopia's government and the Tigray leadership, who dominated the national government for 27 years before Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took office, remains deeply challenging. Ethiopia's government



In this Sunday, May 9, 2021 file photo, displaced Tigrayans line up to receive food donated by local residents at a reception center for the internally displaced in Mekele, in the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia.

earlier this year declared the Tigray People's Liberation Front a terrorist group, and the United States told Thursday's meeting that the government has "not responded positively" to calls for talks.

Meanwhile, the conflict has spread in recent weeks into Ethiopia's Amhara and Afar regions, displacing hundreds of thousands of people, while Abiy's government has called all able citizens to war, urging them to stop the Tigray forces "once and for all." The heated rhetoric on both sides has led to growing international calls for an im-

mediate cease-fire.

The further the resurgent Tigray forces advance outside the Tigray region, "the greater the harm" to the ethnic Tigrayans for whom they act, Kenyan Ambassador Martin Kimani told the Security Council meeting, while urging Ethiopia to be prepared to lift the terror designation. He also encouraged the African Union to step up.

What began as a political falling-out now threatens to destabilize Africa's second most populous country, while abuses have been committed by all sides in the mix of armed groups

that include those from neighboring Eritrea.

The world's worst hunger crisis in a decade continues to worsen.

Guterres at Thursday's meeting criticized the "de facto humanitarian blockade" of the Tigray region of 6 million people, with food warehouses there now empty, and the United States warned that "if these impediments continue, large numbers of people will starve to death."

"With sadness and disbelief, we are once again discussing the possibility of a manmade famine in Tigray," Norway's Deputy

Ambassador Trine Heimerback said, referring to Ethiopia's catastrophic starvation crisis in the 1980s.

"The aim is to exterminate Tigrayans by starving them to death," Debretsion's letter asserted.

Ethiopian Ambassador Taye Atske Selassie told the meeting that his country is improving the process for the delivery of aid. Ethiopia's government has accused Tigray forces of looting and impeding the delivery of aid.

"The TPLF is standing between Ethiopia and peace," he said, accusing it of being "bent on destabilizing" the country of 110 million people. "We are open to working with all well-intentioned partners," he added.

The war that began in November has affected all Ethiopians and "has already drained over a billion dollars from the country's coffers," Guterres said.

But the Security Council appears largely powerless to take significant action on the crisis, as permanent member China expressed its opposition to external interference in Ethiopia's affairs. Both China and Russia warned that sanctions by individual countries, as the U.S. imposed this week against the chief of staff of Eritrea's defense forces, would only worsen the conflict. □

Associated Press

U.S. pledges more aid to earthquake victims in Haiti

By CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN
and EVENS SANON

Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti

(AP) — The United States pledged another \$32 million in aid to the victims of Haiti's 7.2-magnitude earthquake Thursday, as the country's interim prime minister defended his government's response.

U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Samantha Power said the U.S. government had learned from the 2010 Haiti earthquake and said USAID was coordinating

closely with the government of Prime Minister Ariel Henry. "This \$32 million of funding will provide additional shelter, health, food, water and other urgent life-saving assistance," with the input and guidance of the Haitian government, Power said. "Perhaps the most important lesson (from 2010) is that no development agency and no army or diplomatic corps can just import a perfect humanitarian response from afar. You need local expertise and local leadership to reach communities in need."

The Aug. 14 earthquake killed more than 2,200 people and left hundreds of thousands homeless on Haiti's southwestern peninsula. Power and Henry said providing emergency shelter was the top priority nearly two weeks after the temblor. Speaking together at the capital's international airport as U.S. military aircraft ferried people and supplies into the country, Henry said his government was coordinating the relief response despite the turmoil created by the assassination of President Jovenel



U.S. Ambassador to Haiti Michele Sison speaks during a joint press conference in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Thursday, Aug. 26, 2021, two weeks after the 7.2 magnitude earthquake. Behind, from left are USAID Administrator Samantha Power, SOUTHCOM Commander Admiral Faller and Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry.

Associated Press

Moïse July 7.

"The Haitian government is facing a lot of challenges," Henry said. "We have political difficulties, we

have economic difficulties, but despite all these issues, we are addressing the challenges of the earthquake." □

Spain judge nixes backup site for disputed Hawaii telescope

By ARITZ PARRA

Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — A Spanish judge in a decision cheered by environmentalists has put a halt to back-up plans for the construction of a giant telescope in the Canary Islands — eliminating at least for now the primary alternative location to the preferred spot in Hawaii, where there have been protests against the telescope.

Construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope, or TMT, on Hawaii's tallest mountain, Mauna Kea, has been stalled by opponents who say the project will desecrate land held sacred to some Native Hawaiians.

Telescope officials had selected the alternate location near an existing scientific research facility on the highest mountain of La Palma, one of the Spanish islands off the western African coast, in the Atlantic Ocean. But an administrative court in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, the capital of the Spanish archipelago, ruled last month that the 2017 concession by local authorities of public land for the tentative project was invalid. The ruling was dated on July 29, but only became public this week after local media reported about the decision. In the ruling obtained by The Associated Press, Judge Roi López Encinas wrote that the telescope land allocation was subject to an



This July 24, 2009 file photo shows the Gran Telescopio Canarias, one of the the world's largest telescopes, at the Observatorio del Roque de los Muchachos on the Canary Island of La Palma, Spain.

agreement between the Canary Astrophysics Institute, or IAC, and the telescope's promoter, the TMT International Observatory (TIO) consortium.

But the judge ruled that the agreement was not valid because TIO had not expressed an intention to build on the La Palma site instead of at the Hawaii site. The judge also sided with the plaintiff, the environmental group Ben Magec-Ecológicas en Acción, in rejecting arguments by TIO's legal team and the island's government that the land concession was covered by an international treaty on scientific research.

An official for the Canary Islands High Court said questions about the ruling could not be answered because other court officials in a position to answer the questions were on vacation. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to be named in media reports. The island's local elected government chief, Mariano Zapata, said it was "sad" that advocacy groups "are so occupied by administrative matters instead of environmental issues." "I wish we were all in the same boat with the intent of creating jobs in the La Palma island so it can keep being an interna-

tional reference on scientific research," Zapata said. His government estimated last year that the telescope would generate 500 permanent jobs and at least 400 million euros (\$470 million) in investment.

Scott Ishikawa, a spokesperson for the consortium hoping to build the telescope, said that the consortium plans to appeal the ruling. "While we respect the court's ruling in La Palma, we will pursue the legal process to retain La Palma as our alternative site. Hawaii remains our preferred location for TMT, and we have renewed our efforts to better connect with the Hawaii community

in a meaningful and appropriate way," he said in an email to The Associated Press.

Pablo Batista, a spokesman of the Ben Magec-Ecológicas en Acción group, hailed the decision as a big setback for what he called a "fraudulent" project that he said made "fake promises" of new jobs for the island.

"The whole idea of offering the island as a back-up was nothing else but as a strategy to put pressure on the Hawaii plans," Batista said.

In a statement, the group also said that "the five years that the TIO consortium has lost on La Palma should make it reflect on the arrogant and disrespectful strategy that they have carried out both in Hawaii and in the Canary Islands, emboldened by institutional support and despising the arguments of the opposition to the TMT." The group's concerns echo some of the concerns expressed by those fighting the telescope in Hawaii, said Kealoha Pisciotta, one of the leaders seeking to keep the project off Mauna Kea.

"I'm glad that they challenged it, because like here, the challenge helps bring awareness to TMT's not only lack of following the process, but caring for the environment and Hawaiians' sacred site," she said. □



In this Jan 21, 2020 file photo, then Lebanese Prime Minister Hassan Diab, speaks during a press conference, at the Presidential Palace in Baabda, east of Beirut, Lebanon.

Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A Lebanese judge leading the investigation into last year's massive explosion at Beirut's

port issued a subpoena for the country's caretaker prime minister after he failed show up for question-

Lebanon judge issues subpoena for outgoing PM in port blast

ing on Thursday, the state-run National News Agency reported.

Last month, judge Tarek Bitar confirmed charges filed by his predecessor against outgoing Prime Minister Hassan Diab and three former ministers. Diab was summoned for questioning on accusations of intentional killings and negligence. Bitar also summoned former and current generals.

Hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate, a highly

explosive material used in fertilizers that had been improperly stored in the port for years, exploded on Aug. 4, 2020, killing 214 people, injuring more than 6,000 and devastating nearby neighborhoods.

The blast was one of the largest non-nuclear explosions ever recorded and was the most destructive single incident in Lebanon's troubled history. Bitar set a new date for questioning Diab, Sept. 20.

The prime minister had also

declined to be interrogated last year by Bitar's predecessor, Fadi Sawwan. Bitar was named to lead the investigation in February after Sawwan was removed following legal challenges by senior officials he had accused of negligence that led to the blast.

Diab, who resigned following the explosion, said in an interview last year with The Associated Press that he was being singled out and charged while others knew more. □

Mexico: help for U.S. on migrants “can’t go on forever”

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's president again side-stepped questions Thursday about the reinstatement of the U.S. “Remain in Mexico” policy. President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said Mexico will continue helping the United States on immigration. But he noted “it can’t go on forever,” and said attention must turn to development in Central America so people don’t have to emigrate.

“We have taken it upon ourselves to help the U.S. government on the immigration issue, we are going to continue to do so,” López Obrador said.

“We have tried to keep migrants in shelters, above all to protect minors, women,” the president said.

“But this can’t go on forever, we have to get to the bottom of the issue and that means investing in the development of poor countries.”

That was an apparent reference to López Obrador's proposal to expand Mexico's mass tree-plant-



In this Aug. 30, 2019, file photo, migrants, most of who are asylum seekers that have been sent back to Mexico under the Migrant Protection Protocols, to wait for their asylum cases, stand in line to get a meal in an encampment near the Gateway International Bridge in Matamoros, Mexico. Associated Press

ing program into Central America, which pays farmers to plant fruit and timber species. The U.S. government has so far been slow to take up the proposal. In Mexico, the program has been dogged by accusations it encourages farmers

to cut down existing trees, in order to be paid for planting new ones. Mexico is not legally bound to accept the U.S. policy of sending asylum seekers back across the border to wait for hearings on their claims. Mexico allowed

non-Mexicans to be sent back under the administration of Donald Trump, but Mexican officials haven't said if they will allow it to resume. The U.S. Supreme Court refused Tuesday to block a lower court ruling ordering the administra-

tion of President Joe Biden to reinstate the Trump-era policy of forcing people to wait in Mexico for hearings on asylum claims.

Roberto Velasco, Mexico's director for North American affairs, said Wednesday the court ruling is not binding on Mexico. He stressed that Mexico's “immigration policy is designed and executed in a sovereign manner.”

“The Mexican government will start technical discussions with the U.S. government to evaluate how to handle safe, orderly and regulated immigration on the border,” Velasco said. López Obrador endorsed that position Thursday.

Mexico is not legally obligated to receive returning migrants who are not Mexican citizens, and most of the asylum seekers are not. But López Obrador has had good relations with the U.S. government on immigration matters and has willingly cooperated in blocking migrant caravans and deporting migrants trying to reach the U.S. border. □

Indian police rescue 17 children employed illegally

By RISHABH R. JAIN
Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Police accompanied by activists from a children's rights group raided automobile repair shops on the edge of the Indian capital on Thursday and removed 17 children who were employed illegally.

Activists from Bachpan Bachao Andolan, or Save the Children Movement, whose founder, Kailash Satyarthi, was the co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014, went from shop to shop, removing children whose hands, clothes and feet were smeared with grease. The group helps authorities prosecute people employing young children. Children under age 14 are not allowed to work in India

except in family businesses and farms. Those between 14 and 18 are barred from working in hazardous conditions. Employers can face up to two years in prison and a fine of up to 50,000 rupees (\$675). In Thursday's raids, the children, who ranged in age from 13 to 18, were taken away by district government officials. Police sealed the shops where they had been working.

A nationwide coronavirus lockdown imposed last year pushed millions of people into poverty, encouraging the trafficking of children from villages to cities to work. The pandemic has also hampered enforcement of anti-child labor laws, with fewer workplace inspections and less vigorous pursuit of human

traffickers.

Manish Sharma, director of the Save the Children Movement, said traffickers and brokers found it easier to manipulate parents and children during the economic downturn.

“Many became jobless and many reached the brink of starvation. Traffickers took full advantage of such situations,” he said.

According to UNICEF, the U.N. children's agency, the number of children working worldwide increased to 160 million in June 2021. It warned that an additional 9 million could be at risk by the end of 2022 due to the pandemic.

On Thursday, some parents appeared at the automobile repair shops soon after the raid and pleaded with



A child laborer displays his hands after being rescued in a raid by Bachpan Bachao Andolan, or Save the Childhood Movement, at a garage in New Delhi, India, Thursday, Aug. 26, 2021. Associated Press

police and activists to let their children go.

“He is working hard, right? He is not stealing, smoking marijuana, or drinking alcohol,” said the mother of one of the children. She said she only allowed him to work because schools were shut and he was wasting away his time.

Sharma said rehabilitation of rescued children is key.

The former employers will be made to pay unpaid wages and the children will be helped in obtaining various government benefits, including admission to schools, he said. For more than three decades, Satyarthi and the organization he founded have worked to rescue children and create awareness to keep them in school. □

LOCAL



Explore Aruba

ORANJESTAD — Aruba has more things to do BEYOND the beach. Yes, we know. Aruba, located 15 miles north of Venezuela in the warm waters of the southern Caribbean, is home to beautiful white-sand beaches, 82-degree days, and thus ideal for the perfect beach day. But we are also blessed with some of the warmest people in the world and our island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across, with a total area of 70 square miles. Bit more to discover than the white stretch on the coastline we say. This is one of our hidden gems.

Arikok National Park

The Arikok National park is worth the ride. We love the hikes that are guided by the park's rangers whose job is to maintain trails and protect natural resources. The flora and fauna are beautiful and the histori-



cal sites tell you about the island's indigenous roots. The guided tours are even free of charge. If you are not up to walking, you can drive through the park, one way or another this park is a great place to spend an entire day. Cruising through the landscape you end up at some of the most stunning beaches like Dos Playa or Daimara Beach. In Total the park consists of

7907 acres protected nature with a richness of animals living in it. The Aruban whiptail lizard (cododo), Aruban cat eye snake (santanero) and endangered rattle snake (cascabel) are just some of them, you can also admire these close in the park's Visitors' Center. For more information, visit the website www.arubanational-park.org

Four drugs seizures in one week for HNLMS Holland



SAVANETA — Dutch patrol vessel HNLMS Holland has intercepted three additional shipments of drugs. In the Caribbean Sea, the patrol vessel managed to stop go-fasts two days running, seizing significant shipments of cocaine. The two drug hauls preceded another drugs seizure previously announced by the Netherlands Ministry of Defence. A few days later a fourth drugs seizure followed.

On Monday 9 August, the Dutch Caribbean Coast-guard spotted a go-fast. HNLMS Holland and her NH90 maritime combat helicopter pursued the suspicious contact. When the go-fast ignored the stop signals and warning shots, a Marine Corps sharpshooter in the helicopter took out the three outboard motors. Once the go-fast had been brought to a halt, a combined team of the US Coast Guard and the Netherlands Marine Corps conducted a boarding. Bales of drugs were recovered from the sea, resulting in a haul of more than 1,000 kilos of cocaine.

New sighting

As HNLMS Holland continued on her way in the morning of Tuesday 10 August, she encountered a go-fast that had been sighted by both the US Coast Guard and the Dutch Caribbean Coast Guard. HNLMS Holland, with the US Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment on board, also successfully completed that interception and seized approximately 800 kilos of cocaine. The third drugs haul took place on Thursday 12 August under the flag of the Dutch Caribbean Coast Guard. The Netherlands MoD was able to announce that haul earlier. And on Monday, August 16, the Coast Guard authorities detected a go-fast on Caribbean waters for the fourth time. HNLMS Holland deployed her NH90 helicopter on this. Again on this boat, stop signals and warning shots were needed to force it to stop. With the help of the NH90, a large part of the contraband – about 360 kilograms of cocaine – was removed from the water.

Joint action with the Americans

The first, second and fourth drug haul took place in support of the Joint Interagency Task Force South. This is a partnership headed by the Americans and focused on international counter-drug operations. The detainees and the contraband from the seizures on 9, 10 and 16 August were later handed over to a United States Coast Guard vessel for prosecution in the United States. The three hauls amounted to a total of more than 2,160 kilos of cocaine.

Constitutional task

HNLMS Holland returned to its post as station ship in the Caribbean in May 2021 and combines counter-drugs operations with lending support to the Dutch Caribbean Coast Guard. Enforcing the international rule of law is one of the constitutional tasks of the Defence organization. At this moment HNLMS Holland is providing emergency aid to Haiti.

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A very fine culinary journey of Caribbean and Peruvian fusion cuisine**

EAGLE BEACH — The Kitchen Table is an elegant, classy, intimate, high-quality restaurant with an exceptional dining set-up. Dining here is an experience, a kind of sitting- at your- best- friend's or family's kitchen table where you feel and taste that the food contains love. Are you looking for something different, an ecstatic foody trip, than this is where you need to go.

The 7-8 course gastronomic journey will start with sparkling wine at the patio of The Kitchen Table's new location at Paradise Beach Villas as of 6.45PM. Around 7.00PM guests will be guided for a memorable dinner on the second floor of the other popular restaurant Asi Es Mi Peru. The dining concept reflects extraordinary, elegant and exquisite dishes from the Caribbean, Peruvian fusion and international cuisine created by the owners, Chef David Lizano and his team. To pair the perfect wines three sommeliers were invited to make the selection.

The interior of the restaurant is if you were in an elegant establishment in Lima, the capital city of Peru. You feel elevated in the top of the building where dinner takes place in an intimate setting. The typical, colorful Peruvian fabrics dress the ceiling while the large windows dignify the room. There are only 16 seats available creating an intimacy underlined by the owner's personal attention. "This is an amazing experience," says

Robert J. Giordanella from New York. "The food is truly divine," shares a local guest. An evening at The Kitchen Table will be noted as unforgettable in your book of vacation memories, as it stands out from the regular island dinners.

It is all about consistency

The Peruvian-born Roxanna Salinas and her husband Jan van Nes are the secret formula behind The Kitchen Table's success. The couple takes a personal approach to what they do, this is not about running a business as usual. This is more about making you feel welcomed home, as well as being pampered. They bring top hospitality, experience and authenticity to the table. Within this gourmet dinner concept the two blended the Peruvian culinary art of Roxanna's top kitchen team and Jan's expertise from The Kitchen Table. The result is one big trip of delight, indulge and tickling of your taste buds. The Kitchen Table welcomes you with open arms every Tuesday to Saturday.

Peruvian touch

In the last ten years, Peru has been recognized as one of the world's best culinary destinations, and for seven consecutive years, the South American country has won the award for the Best Culinary destination at the Worlds Travel Awards. Biodiversity combined multiculturalism are the reasons why



Peru is so rich in gastronomy. You can travel through the last 500 years, touch a mix of cultures whenever you taste authentic Peruvian cuisine. The Kitchen Table brings this epicurean delicacies to Aruba paired perfectly with the best wines and they will make you understand why Peru is at the height of today's gastronomy.

The Kitchen Table is open from Tuesday to Saturday. Have a peak on their website www.thekitchentableinaruba.com or call them at +297-280 7117. □



Blue Residences: Work & pleasure in paradise

EAGLE BEACH — Dreaming of your own private Caribbean sanctuary is a reality now. Allow us to define this: Blue Residences offers you a condo or penthouse with top notch amenities equal to the offerings of high-class resorts facing the Caribbean Sea, the white-powdered sands of Eagle Beach. According to the Travelers Choice Beaches Award, it is one of the top 25 beaches in the world. And if you don't believe them, you can always read the thousands of positive reviews on TripAdvisor.

Blue Residences is situated in front of The Bubali Plas bird sanctuary and one of the biggest reservoirs on the island. It's also within walking distance to Palm Beach, home of the high-rise luxury hotels. The location is unequalled on the island with a

variety of water sports concessions, casinos, restaurants, bars and shops just a leisurely stroll away.

The onsite amenities include pools, hot tub, restaurant, landscaped sun-deck, fitness center, full service spa and concierge service.

The project has three towers which contains 60 two-bedroom, two-bath units; 32 three-bedroom, three-bath units; 8 one bedroom, one bathroom unit; 4 four-bedroom, four-bath duplex townhouses; 2 five-bedroom, five-and-a-half-bath duplex townhouses; 12 three-bedroom, four-bath duplex penthouses; and 6 five-bedroom, five-and-a-half-bath duplex penthouses.

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Caribbean and own an amazing, upscale penthouse. There are two levels of 180 degrees of spectacular, ocean-viewing pleasure and amazing daily sunsets await you! Porcelain tiles, Italian-designed kitchens, stainless steel appliances (stove, refrigerator, dishwasher and microwave), washer and

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Did you know Aruba has the best internet connection in the whole of the Caribbean?

Did you also know that the island is actually designed for working remotely? All the facilities you need are ready for you, there are even special "workation packages" available.

Yes. The office at Blue Residences is just right for you. With windows all around you for viewing the blue skies and turquoise waters as decoration for an energized, productive day is set.



If you want to rent or buy and live the Blue Residences experience please email Jaime Gomez at jgomez@azure-aruba.com or visit www.bluearuba.com. The sales office is open from Monday to Sundays from 9 am to 5 pm. Go see the amazing view. ☐

Dilemma for Fed chief: High inflation and a surging virus

By **CHRISTOPHER RUGABER**

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Not

long ago, anticipation was high that Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell might begin to sketch out a plan this week for the Fed to start pulling back on its support for an economy that has been steadily strengthening.

That was before COVID-19 cases began accelerating across the country. Now, the decision of how and when the Fed should begin dialing back its help for the economy has become a more complicated one.

Yet in outlining his view of the economy and the threats it faces in a high-profile speech Friday, Powell may provide important clues to the timing of changes in the Fed's ultra-low-interest rate policies.

The big question has been when the Fed will begin to slow its purchases of Treasury and mortgage bonds. The Fed has been buying \$120 billion in bonds each month since the pandemic erupted in March 2020 to try to keep longer-term rates low and encourage borrowing and spending. It has also pegged its short-term benchmark interest rate at nearly zero since then. Powell will be speaking Friday at an annual conference of academics and central bankers. The conference, sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City and normally held in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, will instead be a virtual-only event for a second straight year. A surge of COVID-19 cases near the Wyoming resort delivered a direct impact on the Fed itself by forcing a last-minute cancellation of its in-person plans. The hasty shift to an online event reflects the rapid rebound of the pandemic, led by the delta variant, particularly in the South and Northwest. It follows a sharp decline in confirmed cases earlier in the summer that had raised hopes that the coronavirus and its economic impact might be fading.

Just a few weeks ago, many Fed officials were sig-

naling that the economy was making solid progress toward the central bank's

occur." The uncertainties raised by the delta variant make it likelier that the Fed

concerned about the opposite problem: That inflation will decline too far from

Black Americans and Latinos and restoring the job market to its pre-pandemic health.

Yet the number of older Americans who are retiring has accelerated since the pandemic struck, and it's far from clear that low interest rates would induce many of them to return to work. A smaller workforce could make it harder to restore the job market to pre-pandemic levels.

Many economists were surprised by remarks from Clarida this month suggesting that a return to an unemployment rate of 3.8% would meet the Fed's goal of maximum employment and justify a rate hike by the end of 2022, earlier than Fed officials had projected in June.

Even if the jobless rate falls that low it is now 5.4% millions of Americans could remain on the sidelines, no longer looking for work and therefore not counted as unemployed. Black and Latino Americans would likely have much higher unemployment rates. Fed officials had previously made clear that they would take those concerns into account, but Clarida did not mention them.

"They've certainly not reinforced their commitment to broad and inclusive gains," Adam Posen, president of the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said on a conference call with reporters. "They could have stuck with it much more than they did."

Fed officials had expected much more clarity around the economy and job market by early fall. As the pandemic faded, more Americans would return to work, instead of shying away out of fear of viral infection. Now the delta variant could prolong that fear and postpone the point at which the Fed can get a clear read on the job market. "It's really hard for Powell to signal much here," said William English, a former senior official at the Fed and now a finance professor at the Yale School of Management. "They're in a world with a lot of uncertainty." □



Federal Reserve Board Chair Jerome Powell testifies before Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs hearing to examine the Semiannual Monetary Policy Report to Congress, July 15, 2021, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Associated Press

two goals of maximum employment and annual inflation at just above 2% for a sustained period. Several presidents of regional Federal Reserve Banks said they wanted to announce a reduction, or taper, of the bond purchases at the Fed's next meeting in September.

Yet some economists have been slashing their forecasts for economic growth in the current July-September quarter. Restaurant traffic has declined slightly. Last week, Powell said it wasn't yet clear what the delta strain's impact on the economy would be. But he emphasized that the pandemic was far from over and was still "casting a shadow on economic activity."

With the economic picture hazier now, economists will be listening carefully for clues Powell may provide about the Fed's intentions. "I'll be watching how he characterizes current conditions and the outlook he has for the economy," said Ellen Gaske, an economist at PGIM Fixed Income. "That will give us a sense of how soon the tapering will

will announce a tapering in November or later, economists said, rather than in September. That would allow Fed officials to consider two additional months of data on inflation and jobs to gauge the delta variant's impact.

The resurgence of the virus is hardly the only complicating factor facing the Fed. Inflation has surged to a three-decade high as a sharp rebound in consumer spending and shortages in many commodities and parts, such as semiconductors, have sent prices rising for airline tickets, hotel rooms, new and used cars and restaurant meals. The Fed's preferred inflation gauge jumped 3.5% in June compared with a year earlier, the biggest such rise since 1991.

Higher inflation has, in turn, intensified pressure on Powell and the Fed to rein in their stimulus policies. Powell, though, has consistently expressed confidence that higher inflation will prove temporary, even if it persists for several more months. Many economists and Wall Street investors agree. Some, in fact, are more

its current level.

At the same time, growth could slow. Government stimulus is set to fade next year. No more stimulus checks are in the pipeline, and a \$300-a-week federal unemployment supplement is set to expire in two weeks. Gaske noted that the price jumps have caused consumers to reduce their spending on things like cars and furniture, which over time reduces inflation pressures. That's in contrast to the late 1970s, the last time the United States faced rapid inflation, when rising prices encouraged a "buy it while you can" mentality, Gaske said. Ongoing spending at that time drove costs even higher. As a result, any pull-back in the Fed's low-rate policies could help pull inflation below its 2% annual target in a year or two.

It's also getting harder for the Fed to define its other policy goal of "maximum employment." Initially Powell and other officials, including Vice Chair Richard Clarida, defined it as a "broad and inclusive" goal that included sharply reducing unemployment for

CROSSWORD

By **THOMAS JOSEPH**

ACROSS 40 Character-

1 School
group

6 Plotting
group

11 Custom

12 Kagan
of the
Supreme
Court

13 Got up
14 Actor
Alain

15 Gun, as a
motor

16 Series unit

18 Poem of
praise

19 Singer
Shannon

20 Director
Anderson

21 Nick
Charles's
wife

23 Tumbler,
e.g.

25 Mess up

27 Curator's
concern

28 Ignore the
limit

30 Scout's
base

33 Munich
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34 Bar bill

36 "The
Matrix"
hero

37 Market
concern

39 Dapper
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41 Get up

43 Pilgrimage
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44 Like Poe
tales

45 One
of the
Kennedys

46 European
viper

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1 Styx
ferryman

2 City on
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3 Perfect

4 Bro's kin

5 Rider's
horse

6 François
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Yesterday's answer

7 Brighton
brews

8 Not good
enough

9 Battery
ends

10 Highway
sections

17 Coat rack
part

22 Verb for
you

24 Compass
Irace

26 Check the
addition

28 Concealed

29 Block up

31 Nasty guy

32 Think
about

33 "Under-
stand?"

35 One way
to travel

38 Pleasant

42 Slugger
Williams

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40						41	42		
43						44			
45						46			

R.27

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

8-27

CRYPTOQUOTE

NJ OC DV GJAC DE NJ NJQHS

XDNS U GDYSNCT SUVR. DV

MJQTECGK MJQ ENTCNHS. MJQ

UTC XCGG. . . YXCVRJGMV

OTJJWE

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: BARBECUE MAY NOT BE THE ROAD TO WORLD PEACE. BUT IT'S A START. — ANTHONY BOURDAIN



In this March 28, 2018, file photo, a North Atlantic right whale feeds on the surface of Cape Cod bay off the coast of Plymouth, Mass.

Associated Press

Concern about endangered whales cited in suit over wind farm

By **PHILIP MARCELO**
Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — The construction of dozens of wind turbines off the coast of Nantucket threatens the survival of a dwindling number of endangered Northern Atlantic right whales that inhabit the waters, a group of residents on the affluent resort island in Massachusetts argue in a federal lawsuit filed Wednesday.

ACK Residents Against Turbines said Vineyard Wind's proposed project of some 60 turbines 14 miles (22 kilometers) south of the island is located in a crucial area for foraging and nursing for the species, which researchers estimate number less than 400.

Mary Chalke, a Nantucket resident and member of the opposition group, said the lawsuit isn't just about Vineyard Wind, but other turbine projects also in the pipeline up and down the Eastern Seaboard.

"We all want renewable energy," she said after the group filed the suit in Boston federal court. "This represents the transformation and industrialization of a pristine natural environment."

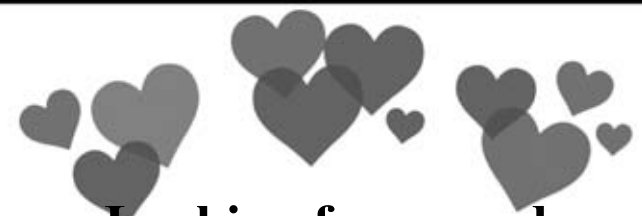
The U.S. Bureau of Ocean

Energy Management and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which are named in the suit, declined to comment, citing the pending litigation. Vineyard Wind, a joint project of a Danish company and a U.S. subsidiary of the Spanish energy giant, Iberdrola, also declined to comment. But the American Clean Power Association, a group that represents renewable energy companies, stressed the project has undergone a lengthy environmental review, permit-

ting and public comment process.

"It appears this lawsuit is being brought by residents motivated by aesthetic concerns as much as anything alleged in their complaint," Tom Vinson, a vice president with the association, said in a statement.

Vallorie Oliver, a Nantucket resident, acknowledged that visibility of the towering structures which could be as tall as 850-feet (260 meters) and eclipse Boston's 790-foot (240 meter) Hancock Tower is among the group's concerns. □



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What is a COVID-19 vaccine passport, and do I need one?

By **MATT O'BRIEN**

AP Technology Writer

What is a COVID-19 vaccine passport, and do I need one?

"Vaccine passports" are digital or paper documents that show you were vaccinated against COVID-19, and could help you get into a growing number of places.

What they look like and why you might want one depend on where you live, but more private venues, workplaces and governments are requiring proof of vaccination in public settings.

Europe and U.S. states like California and New York created official digital credentials that let you verify your COVID-19 immunization record and convert it into a scannable QR code you can pull up on your cellphone.

Most places that require vaccination proof also accept simpler options, such as the paper card noting the dates of your shots from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In the U.S., showing a photo of that card on your phone will usually suffice.

Denmark, Greece, France, Italy, some Canadian provinces and the U.S. cities of New Orleans, New York and San Francisco are among the places that have vaccination requirements to get into places like indoor restaurants or theaters. Enforcement varies and many places also accept a recent negative test for the virus, a partial vaccination or proof that you previously recovered from the disease.

Even without government mandates, more businesses in countries where vaccines are readily available are starting to ask for proof that you got the shots, so long as their local governments haven't blocked them from doing so.

Officials around the world were initially reluctant to mandate vaccines, but some now hope doing so will persuade more people



What is a COVID-19 vaccine passport, and do I need one?

(Associated Press Illustration/Peter Hamlin)

to get the shots. Businesses requiring proof of vaccination say they are trying to make customers and employees feel safe.

Protesters in France and elsewhere have criticized vaccine mandates as invasive and restricting freedom of movement. Privacy advocates have raised concerns about getting people in the habit of having their phones scanned wherever they go, and generally favor options that won't be tracked, such as a paper record

or a digital copy in your phone that can be shown at the door. □

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CLEAN**



**IS MORE
DUSHI**



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Q&A: For McAvoy, Horgan 'Together' is an actor's dream

By **LINDSEY BAHR**

AP Film Writer

James McAvoy and Sharon Horgan didn't know one another before this year. But the two actors got very familiar very quickly thanks to the new film "Together," a cutting examination of a failing relationship during the pandemic only held together by their 10-year-old son. Armed with acerbic dialogue and honest monologues written by Tony Award-winner Dennis Kelly, an Oscar-nominated director in Stephen Daldry and a freedom to break the fourth wall and address the audience directly, McAvoy and Horgan got to flex their skills as actors while diving into the collective trauma of the past 18 months. The film opens in North American theaters Friday.

McAvoy and Horgan spoke to The Associated Press recently about the intense process and not holding anything back. Remarks have been edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: This was an insanely quick 10-day shoot. Were you at least able to rehearse beforehand?

HORGAN: Oh yes. There was an awful lot to work out because we were going to be in this one house and mainly utilizing two rooms and so in order for them to be in any way interesting visually to look at, we needed to sort of get it up on its feet and get moving with it. Stephen just kept us mov-



This image released by Bleecker Street shows James McAvoy, left, and Sharon Horgan in a scene from "Together."

ing constantly. Then this funny thing happened, well it wasn't funny at the time, but it kept happening... we would rehearse something and work it all out in movement and choreograph it and then no one could remember what we did... but in actual fact, you would usually end up in a place that worked better. **AP:** This isn't quite as mean as say, "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf," but these characters are pretty cruel to one another. Was that exciting to perform?

HORGAN: It was really exciting. Every day you just didn't know where you'd get to and it felt really unusual to get to do that...

I'm quite shy as a person. I'm a bit like, "Don't look at me" and James is so immediately in it and doing it. It was like, "Oh we're doing this?" You had to lose your inhibitions. You had to be willing to try anything.

MCAVOY: There's a little bit of film acting where it's like, "Save it for the camera, save it for the take"... People don't even care sometimes if you're saying the lines in the script as long as something truthful got captured on camera, something vital and alive and full of energy... But this is so detailed and so dense... you couldn't just save it for the camera. You couldn't just save it for the day and

hope a better truth would come out because maybe a truth comes out in the first five seconds and then you realize you have 20 minutes of this and you need to make every minute work. If one minute doesn't work... the audience will check out. It felt like we were getting to use our craft rather than just being little vehicles for honesty and truth.

AP: James, is doing a project like this about the emotional toll of the pandemic coming from the same place as your impulse to raise money for PPE?

MCAVOY: No, absolutely not. It's just completely selfish and personal... Sometimes it's just as simple as,

"My God, the writing is compelling enough that all I need to do is look into the camera and talk to you for 10 minutes and it's enough." There's something so pure about that. It's like when you're in the pub or your pal's telling you a story or you're having a conversation with a mate or your missus or your son or whoever. When the conversation is that compelling and that exciting, hours go by, days go by, weeks go by. If we can do that in writing and filming and acting, then that is really, really special because that's real connection. This felt like it had the potential to be that.

HORGAN: It's what I find interesting to write and it's what I find interesting to perform. When you're writing about relationships, the things that are easiest to write are the ones that are dysfunctional because it's funny or interesting.

I don't have a huge amount of interest in just having sweet stories.

MCAVOY: Generally when we're happy, we kind of understand why we're happy. We don't really understand why we're a mess, that's why we do years and years and years and years of therapy. That's what drama is for, that's what comedy is for, that's what any kind of art is for — to help us look at ourselves and understand why we're such a (expletive) mess. □

Associated Press

Fire damages self-described 'birthplace' of Harry Potter

LONDON (AP) — A cafe in Scotland's capital where author J.K. Rowling wrote some of the Harry Potter books has been damaged in a fire.

The Elephant House in Edinburgh suffered smoke and water damage after a blaze broke out at the patisserie next door on Tuesday.

More than 60 firefighters and 12 fire engines were deployed to tackle the blaze. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service said one of its crew members was tak-

en to hospital as a precaution and later released. Images showed the cafe with its front windows gone, a ruined interior and debris lying outside.

Owner David Taylor told the BBC he was "devastated" by the extensive damage to his business. He said the cafe would likely be closed for months for repairs.

The Elephant House is a regular stop for Harry Potter fans and long bore a sign declaring itself as the "birthplace" of the fiction-

al young wizard.

Rowling has disputed that, saying she began writing the magical stories before she moved to Edinburgh. But she confirmed she frequented the cafe while penning some of the seven-book series.

The Patisserie Valerie, where Tuesday's fire started, also was heavily damaged.

Firefighters remained at the scene in Edinburgh's Old Town with the street closed off into Wednesday. □



Firefighters at the scene after a fire at the Elephant House Cafe in Edinburgh, Wednesday, Aug. 25, 2021.

Associated Press

Djokovic's true Slam bid at U.S. Open starts against qualifier

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP
Tennis Writer

Novak Djokovic will begin his bid to win the U.S. Open for a men's-record 21st major tennis championship and to complete a calendar-year Grand Slam by facing a player who comes through qualifying.

Win that, and Djokovic's potential path — as determined by Thursday's draw — could include 2014 finalist Kei Nishikori in the third round, No. 6 seed Matteo Berrettini in the quarterfinals in a rematch of last month's Wimbledon final and No. 4 Alexander Zverev, the 2020 runner-up in New York, in the semifinals.

Naomi Osaka's first Grand Slam action since she withdrew from the French Open following a first-round victory to take a mental health break will come against Marie Bouzkova, a 23-year-old from the Czech Republic who is ranked 86th and has a 1-10 career record at the majors, including 0-3 at Flushing Meadows. Osaka won their only previous encounter in straight sets at last year's Australian Open. Looking past that, Osaka could face 17-year-old American Coco Gauff — whom she beat in New



Novak Djokovic, of Serbia, serves to Jan-Lennard Struff, of Germany, during the third round of the U.S. Open tennis championships in New York, in this Friday, Sept. 4, 2020, file photo.

Associated Press

York in 2019 and lost to at Melbourne Park in 2020 — or three-time major champion Angelique Kerber in the fourth round. Osaka, seeded No. 3, is the reigning champion at the U.S. Open, one of her four major titles, which all have come on hard courts.

The possible women's quarterfinal pairings by seeding are No. 1 Ash Barty, the Wimbledon champion, against No. 7 Iga Swiatek,

No. 4 Karolina Pliskova against No. 6 Bianca Andreescu, Osaka against No. 5 Elina Svitolina, and No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka against No. 8 Barbora Krejcikova. Main draw play starts Monday with spectators allowed at full capacity, a year after all fans were banned because of the coronavirus pandemic. The No. 1-seeded Djokovic is the first man to head to Flushing Meadows af-

ter having won a season's first three major titles since Rod Laver went 4 for 4 at the Slams in 1969. That was Laver's second true Grand Slam, after 1962; Don Budge in 1938 is the only other man to win all four majors in a single year. Steffi Graf in 1988 was the last woman to do it. The other potential men's quarterfinal matchups are Zverev vs. No. 7 Denis Shapovalov, No. 2 Daniil

Medvedev vs. No. 8 Casper Ruud, and No. 3 Stefanos Tsitsipas vs. No. 5 Andrey Rublev.

In the first round, Tsitsipas will meet Andy Murray, whose three Grand Slam titles include the 2012 U.S. Open.

Djokovic, Murray and No. 30 Marin Cilic, who beat Nishikori at Arthur Ashe Stadium in the final seven years ago, are the only players in the 128-player men's bracket who already have won a Grand Slam trophy in singles.

Medvedev, Tsitsipas and Berrettini all were finalists at majors this year and lost to Djokovic.

Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal — who currently share the men's mark of 20 Slam titles with Djokovic — are both injured and done for the season. Last year's U.S. Open champion, Dominic Thiem, also withdrew, citing a bad wrist, and the 2016 winner, Stan Wawrinka, is out after foot surgery. Serena and Venus Williams, owners of a combined 30 Grand Slam singles trophies that include eight from the U.S. Open, pulled out of the field Wednesday because of leg injuries. □

Fraser-Pryce avenges Olympic 100 loss in blazing 10.60 time

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (AP) — Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce clocked the third-fastest women's 100 meters in history to beat Olympic champion Elaine Thompson-Herah at the Athletissima meeting on Thursday.

Fraser-Pryce surged clear of her Jamaican rival from the blocks and timed 10.60 seconds with Thompson-Herah 0.04 back. A cooling tailwind at 1.7 meters per second was within the legal limit.

The 34-year-old Fraser-Pryce took 0.03 off the personal best she set in Jamaica in June, nine years after winning her second Olympic title in the 100.

"It's been a long season

but for me I never give up, keep working hard and staying committed to the task," she told Swiss broadcaster RTS in a post-race interview.

Both women have improved their times since Thompson-Herah retained her Olympic title in Tokyo in a blazing 10.61, where Fraser-Pryce took silver in 10.74.

On Saturday, Thompson-Herah took her personal best down to 10.54 at the Prefontaine meeting in Eugene, Oregon. That is second all-time to Florence Griffith-Joyner's 33-year-old world record of 10.49. Fraser-Pryce is running the fastest season of her career four years after giving

birth to a son.

"I'm happy that I was able to still show up and show women that it's definitely possible to have your career, start your family, and come back," she said.

A packed stadium of about 12,000 spectators saw the first six runners in the 100 dip below 11 seconds. Olympic bronze medalist Shericka Jackson was again third in 10.92.

A half-hour later, the wind was up to 3.2 meters per second for the men's 200. That meant Olympic silver medalist Kenny Bednarek's winning time of 19.65 will not count as his personal best.

Yulimar Rojas, the charismatic triple jumper, had



Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce of Jamaica, right, and Elaine Thompson-Herah of Jamaica compete in the women's 100 meters race at the Athletissima IAAF Diamond League international athletics meeting at the Stade Olympique de la Pontaise in Lausanne, Switzerland, Thursday, Aug. 26, 2021.

Associated Press

a wind-assisted opening leap of 15.56 meters, just 11 centimeters short of her world record in Tokyo.

"I really think I can break my world record again in Zurich," Rojas said of the Sept. 8-9 finals meet on

the Diamond League circuit.

Several other prominent athletes struggled, though, in the first major post-Olympic meeting in Europe — held nine time zones away from Oregon. □

NFL players experiment with 'Guardian Caps' to protect heads

By STEVE REED

AP Sports Writer

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — For

Carolina Panthers rookie offensive lineman Brady Christensen any chance to protect his brain is a no-brainer — even if he thinks he may look a little goofy doing so.

That's why Christensen is among a growing number of NFL players taking advantage of the new "Guardian Caps," a soft-shell cover that retrofits to the top of the helmet to reduce impact and limit head injuries.

Sure, it's a little strange at first, like wearing a small pillow on top of your head.

But NFL players seem to be taking to it at practice.

"Anything to protect my brain a little bit more, I'm all in," Christensen said. "I want to remember my kids' names when I'm 50."

The Jacksonville Jaguars first experimented with the Guardian Caps in practice last year after the product received temporary approval from the NFL and the NFL Players Association. This year, 23 teams purchased the caps before the season for players to try out and five are actively using them: the Panthers, Bills, Dolphins, Bears and Rams. More than 100 players, mostly linemen, are using the caps, according to Jeff Miller, the NFL's executive vice president of communications for public affairs and policy. "We are always on the lookout for ways to make the game safer for our players," Miller said. "And will explore anything that will improve the health and safety of our athletes. ... This will dampen the force of some of those hits that they take to the helmet."

It's not hard to notice them. Buffalo Bills center Mitch Morse joked that when he first tried on the cap he felt like a character in a Halo video game.

"You got people giving you hell, your family being like 'what the hell is this?'" Morse said with a laugh.

Morse said at first his neck was a little sore from wearing the caps, but he's



Carolina Panthers tackle Taylor Moton wears a Guardian Cap over his helmet to provide an extra layer of protection during practice at the NFL football team's training camp in Spartanburg, S.C., Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021.

grown to like the added protection.

"It's something that I'm very comfortable with and then we tried it on and, of course, we gave each other hell for how it looks," Morse said. "But then after one practice, I looked at (Bills defensive lineman) Justin Zimmer, I'm like 'man, I know we were getting after it, and I didn't feel anything.'"

Through extensive testing at the Biocore laboratories of Charlottesville, Virginia, the NFL believes the caps reduce the severity of impact blows to the head by about 10%.

Currently, more than 200 colleges are using them, including all top five ranked teams in the country. More than 1,500 high schools and 500 youth programs also use the caps to protect their players and there are currently more than 100,000 Guardian Caps in the market today.

The caps used by NFL players weigh about 11 ounces, about 4 ounces heavier than those used by college and high school players simply because professional athletes are generally bigger. Bills defensive tackle Ed Oliver said he tried out the caps at the University of Houston, and jumped at the chance to wear the device again at

the NFL level.

"You really don't feel it," Oliver said. "The only thing that's weird is when you watch film they tend to slide up and it looks crazy on film. Other than that they aren't bad."

Guardian Innovations, the makers of the caps, won the inaugural NFL HealthTECH Challenge in 2017, a competition funded by the NFL to encourage innovations in equipment. This led to continued discussions and testing with NFL and NFL Players Association engineering consultants. The results of the product were reviewed by NFL chief medical officer Dr. Allen Sills and by the NFLPA's medical director Dr. Thom Mayer and found to be beneficial in the protection of impact to the head.

Erin Hanson, the owner and founder of Guardian Innovations, said she and husband Lee started the company because they knew they had a solution that could better protect players and felt an obligation and responsibility to help.

"The mission of our company is to innovate equipment to better serve athletes," Hanson said.

Miller said the NFL is still in "information collection mode," talking to players and learning from them

about what they like and dislike about the product. The caps are only allowed in practice and cannot be worn in games. But Miller wouldn't rule out players wearing them on game day in the future.

"We will go back after this preseason, put our heads

together on the user feedback and think through whether we would want to take another step in terms of permitting it on the field during games," Miller said. "We haven't made that decision, and we won't make it for this year. But it's another data point that will we talk through. Look, there is no product device data point that improves health and safety for the players that we would dismiss."

For now, the hope of those at Guardian Innovations is that more NFL players will take advantage of the product and try it out.

"Anytime you are doing something different it just takes some time to get more traction," said Tony Plagman, a national sales manager for Guardian Innovations. "But we are seeing some feedback where guys are saying, 'I like it. I think it's helping.' So hopefully word will spread between players that it doesn't really matter what you look like if it's something that can help you throughout the course of your career." □

Associated Press

Cort Nielsen bags another win, Eiking keeps Vuelta lead

CÓRDOBA, Spain (AP) — Magnus Cort Nielsen earned another sprint victory at the Spanish Vuelta on Thursday to win a hot and hilly 12th stage, while Odd Christian Eiking kept the race lead.

Cort Nielsen was launched by an EF Education teammate down the final stretch of the 175-kilometer (109-mile) route and stayed ahead of Andrea Gaggioli to beat the Italian by almost a wheel length.

It was the Dane's second win at this year's edition of the Vuelta and his fifth career stage victory at the Spanish race. "The whole team did a great job today," Cort Nielsen said. "I managed to get over the two climbs and my team did a great job delivering me for a the sprint." With temperatures above 36 degrees Celsius (96 degrees Fahrenheit) at times, riders tried to stay cool as possible with the help of water bottles supplied by their teams. The route that started in Jaén traversed the medieval city of Córdoba before it went up and over two climbs and looped back to a finish in the southern city. The results left the overall standings untouched. Eiking, a Norwegian rider for Intermarche-Wanty, leads Guillaume Martin by 58 seconds.

Two-two defending champion Primož Roglic, who is considered the race favorite given the number of mountain stages ahead, is third at 1:56 behind.

Roglic was involved in an awkward group crash on a flat stretch when several riders tumbled into one another on a sharp corner. But he was quickly escorted back to the peloton by his Jumbo-Visma team. □